

WEEK-END FICTION

Adventure.

& & & The Taking of the Redoubt. 2 2 2

By Prosper Merimee.

A MILITARY friend of mine, who died of a fever in Greece a few years ago, told me one day of the first action in which he had a share. His story made so great an impression on me that I wrote it down from memory as soon as I found time. Here it is:

I joined my regiment on the 4th of September, in the evening. I found the colonel in camp. He received me rather brusquely, but after reading the general's recommendation his manner changed, and he said a few polite words to me.

I was presented by him to my captain, who had just returned from a reconnaissance. This captain, with whom I hardly had the time to become acquainted, was a tall, dark man, with a harsh, repellent face. He had once been a private, and had won his epaulettes and his cross on the battlefield. His voice, which was hoarse and weak, contrasted strangely with his almost gigantic stature. I was told that he was peculiarly of his voice to a bullet which had pierced his lungs at the battle of Jena.

When he learned that I was fresh from the military school at Fontainebleau he made a grimace and said: "My lieutenant died yesterday."

I understood that he meant to imply "You ought to take his place, and you are not competent to do so."

A sharp retort came to my lips, but I restrained myself.

The moon rose behind the Russian Redoubt of Cheverino, about two gunshots from our bivouac. It was large and red, as it usually is when it rises. On that evening, however, it seemed to me of extraordinary size. For an instant the redoubt stood out sharply in black against the brilliant disk of the moon. It resembled the crater of a volcano at the moment of an eruption.

A veteran beside me commented on the color of the moon.

"It is very red," said he. "That's a sign that it will cost us dear to take that famous redoubt."

I have always been superstitious, and his prophecy, at that particular moment, moved me. I lay down, but I could not sleep. I rose and walked about for some time, watching the strangely long line of campfires which covered the heights above the village of Cheverino.

When I thought that the fresh, sharp night air had cooled my blood sufficiently I returned to the fire. I wrapped myself carefully in my cloak and closed my eyes, hoping not to open them before daylight. But sleep refused to come. Instinctively my reflections took a sinister turn. I said to myself that I had not one friend among the hundred thousand men who covered that plain. If I were wounded I should be taken to a hospital and treated roughly by ignorant surgeons. Everything that I had heard of surgical operations came to my mind. My heart beat violently, and I instinctively arranged my handskerchief and the wallet that I carried in my breast pocket as a sort of talisman.

I was worn out with fatigue. I nodded every moment, and every moment some fearful thought returned me to reality. Force and reason came to me with a start. But sleep at last prevailed, and I fell sound asleep till the reveille sounded.

We were drawn up in line of battle, the roll was called, then we stacked arms, and everything indicated that we were to have a quiet day. About 3 o'clock an aide came to my tent, bringing an order. We were again ordered under arms. Our skirmishers spread out over the plain. We followed them slowly, and after some twenty minutes we saw the outposts of the Russians fall back and retire within



the redoubt.

A battery of artillery came into position on our right, another on our left, both well in advance of us. They opened a very hot fire upon the enemy, who replied vigorously; and the redoubt of Cheverino soon disappeared under thick clouds of smoke.

Our regiment was almost protected from the Russian fire by a rise in the ground. Their cannon-balls, which, in fact, were rarely aimed at us—for they preferred to fire at our artillerymen—passed over our heads.

As soon as we had received the order to advance, my captain looked at me with a keen gaze, which compelled me to run my hand over my young mustache two or three times, as unconsciously as I could. In truth, I was not frightened, and the only fear I had was lest he should believe that I was

afraid. Those cannon-balls helped to sustain me in my heroically calm frame of mind. My self-esteem told me that I really was in danger, as I was at last under the fire of a battery. I was ordered to take up a position at my ease, and I thought of the pleasure I should have in telling of the capture of the redoubt of Cheverino in mine. de B—'s salon on Rue de Provence.

The colonel passed our company and spoke to me.

"Well, you are going to see some hot work for your debut."

I smiled with a very martial air as I thrust my coat-sleeve, on which a shot that struck the ground thirty yards away had thrown a little dust.

Apparently the Russians observed the success of their cannon-balls, for they replied to them with shells, which could more easily reach us in the hollow where we were stationed. A large piece of one took off my shako and killed a man near by.

"I congratulate you," said my captain, as I picked up my shako; "you're safe now for today."

I was acquainted with the military superstition which believes that the axiom "Non bis in idem" (not twice in the same place) has the same application on a field of battle as in a court of justice. I proudly replaced my shako on my head.

"I am making a fellow salute rather unceremoniously," I said as gravely as I could. The wretched joke was considered first-rate, in view of the circumstances.

I feigned doubt; many men would have done the same, yet many men would have been, as I was, profoundly impressed by those prophetic words. Novice as I was, I realized that I could not confide my sensations to any one, not that I must always appear cool and brave.

After about half an hour the Russian fire sensibly diminished; whereupon we left our sheltered position to march upon the redoubt.

Our regiment consisted of three battalions. The second was ordered to turn the redoubt on the side of the entrance; the other two would make the assault. I was in the third battalion.

As we came out from behind the low ridge which had protected us we were greeted with several volleys of musketry, which did little damage in our ranks. The whistling of the bullets surprised me; I kept turning my head, and this caused many jokes on the part of my comrades, who were more familiar with the sound.

"Take it all in all," I said to myself, "a battle isn't such a terrible thing."

We advanced at the double-quick, preceded by skirmishers. Suddenly the Russians gave three hurrahs—three distinct hurrahs; then they remained silent and ceased firing.

"I don't like this silence," said my captain. "It bodes us no good."

I considered that our men were a little too noisy, and I could not forbear making a mental comparison between their tumultuous shouting and the enemy's impressive silence.

We speedily reached the foot of the redoubt; the palisades had been shattered and the earth torn up by our artillery fire. The soldiers rushed at these newly made ruins with shouts of "Vive l'Empereur!" louder than one would have expected to hear from men who had already shouted so much.

I raised my eyes, and shall never forget the spectacle that I beheld. The great part of the smoke had risen, and now hung like a canopy about twenty feet above the redoubt. Through a bluish haze we could see the Russian grenadiers behind their demolished parapet, with arms raised and motionless as statues. It seems to me that I can see each soldier now with his left eye fixed upon us, the right hidden by the leveled musket. In an embrace, a few yards away, a man stood beside a cannon, holding a match.

I shuddered, and thought that my last hour had come.

"The dance is going to begin," cried my captain. "Good-night!"

Those were the last words I heard him utter.

The drums rolled inside the redoubt. I saw the muskets drop. I closed my eyes, and heard a most appalling crash, followed by shrieks and groans. I opened my eyes, being surprised to find myself still among the living. The redoubt was filled with smoke and wounded. My captain lay at my feet. His head had been shattered by a bullet. I was surrounded by all the survivors of my company and myself were the last to be seen.

This carnage was succeeded by a moment of stupefaction. The colonel, placing his hat on the point of his sword, was the first to raise the pale, shouting "Vive l'Empereur!" He was followed instantly by all the survivors. I have a very dim recollection of what followed. We entered the redoubt, now, I have no idea. We fought hand to hand, and struck so dense that we could not see one another. I believe that I struck, for my sabre was bloody.

At last I heard shouts of "Victory!" and as the smoke grew less dense I saw blood and corpses completely covering the surface of the redoubt. The Russians especially were buried beneath piles of bodies. About two hundred men, in the French uniform, were standing about in groups, with no pretense of order, some loading their muskets, others wiping their bayonets. Eleven hundred Russian prisoners were taken.

The colonel, covered with blood, was lying on a shattered cannon near the ravine. A number of soldiers were busied about him. I approached.

"Where is the senior captain?" he asked the sergeant. His shoulders shook expressively.

"And the senior lieutenant?"

"Monseigneur, here, who arrived last night," said the sergeant. In a perfectly matter-of-fact way.

The colonel smiled bitterly.

"Well, monseigneur," he said, "you are in luck. I have a very dim recollection of what followed. We entered the redoubt, now, I have no idea. We fought hand to hand, and struck so dense that we could not see one another. I believe that I struck, for my sabre was bloody."

Romance.

& & & Whist With Kitty. 2 2 2

By Sewell Ford.

"YOU" said Kitty, as I came in. "Why not?" said I. "Didn't we promise the old folks a rubber to-night?"

"But—" "Oh, this will be our last game," I hurried to add. For it was all over between us. Jealousy is a thing I could never forgive. What if Madge and I did eat an ice together behind a palm? Was that any cause for Kitty behaving so outrageously with young Mintley?

Of course, I was hardly in the mood for whist, but I had not seen Kitty since that night. I wondered how she was taking it.

Just as though nothing had happened we took our places around the green-topped table. But now, instead of Kitty smiling across the table, she chose Uncle Jeff for a partner, and she sat in frozen dignity at my left. Clubs were out.

Kitty began sorting her cards with the critical confidence of an expert. I smiled. Kitty can never remember the high card of a suit after the second round. I was sorry for Uncle Jeff. He takes his whist seriously, as did Sarah Buntin.

Uncle Jeff led off with a spade. I finessed the queen. Kitty plumped down the king, with an aggravating air of victory. Reproof was needed.

"The king of spades," I remarked. "Always reminds me of Freddie Mintley—same intellectual expression, you know."

Said Kitty, leading the ace of trumps: "And I suppose the queen of hearts suggests Madge Hosings—for the same reason."

We had discovered that Uncle Jeff did not notice undertone remarks. He made during the play. Aunt Helen, dear soul, is somewhat deaf.

"Yes," said I, as Kitty led the king of clubs and drew my Jack. "She does, but for quite another reason."

"Indeed?" Here she led the trump queen, and I discarded exultantly. She was taking two for one. As it happened, however, Kitty held the rest of the clubs herself; but she opened her suit at the wrong end, flinging back at me: "She must be very fascinating."

"Some think so," said I, taking the trick with a ten and leading back through her strength. Kitty was not to be caught napping. She raked her Jack second hand. It won't.

"I guessed as much the other night," she said. "What excellent taste!"

Uncle Jeff chuckled and beamed through his glasses. He went glum enough, though, when he saw Kitty lead up to my suit instead of his.

"It's nice of you to speak so kindly of Madge," I said, taking the trick low and leading the best card, "considering all things."

"Oh, I can't help feeling kindly toward her now." Here Kitty put on the trump and made the right lead.

"What a lovely card! I don't mind saying the same about Mintley, but I'll not."

"What consideration!" Kitty was discarding judiciously.

"Because," I added, "it wouldn't be true. He's a—"

"Trump!" said Kitty, taking the last trick.

They had scored three.

Kitty's Uncle Jeff was shuffling the cards deliberately and making his usual analysis of the hand just played. Before our eyes—that is, before Kitty had acted so foolishly about Madge—it had been our custom, while Uncle Jeff went over the play, to tell each other by looks the silly things we could not speak.

But all that was a thing of the past. Kitty had said so. Well, so let it be. Still, I knew I should miss these evenings with Kitty. And she would probably throw herself away on that infernal young scoundrel! At least she should not suspect that I cared, and she should know at once how matters stood between Madge and me.

The Jack of spades, which I cut for Uncle Jeff, seemed deliberately to cry to him: "Disagreeable, cynical, racial that knave of a spade. But for him—spades would be my favorite suit. As it is, I never feel secure until he is out of the way."

"Spade, eh?" said Kitty's Uncle Jeff, as he lifted the turn-up card. He al-

ways expresses surprise when he picks up the trump, although he invariably turns it over directly after the out.

"Well, dig away."

The words gave me an idea. It was Grand, wasn't it, or was it some other Greek general, who refused to move his army until the spades came up? He knew the value of defense, whoever he was.

"I saw Madge yesterday," said I, leading an innocent heart, Jack from king and three others.

"Not since yesterday!" Kitty can never resist putting the queen on Jack's second hand. Aunt Helen played the ace and led trumps.

"We met at the jeweler's," I ventured.

"How interesting?"

"We were looking at rings. I had left one for an inscription to be engraved."

"Our old," said Kitty's Aunt Helen, who, of course, couldn't know that she was interrupting; and then Uncle Jeff began to show Kitty where she might have forced my last trump before losing control.

"But I didn't want the control. I didn't care for it at all, you know," Kitty said with this much more emphasis than was really necessary. The heroism of it moved Uncle Jeff to despairing silence.

It was my deal. As I shuffled the cards I wondered if Kitty and I would ever sit together at a table again. Dealing gave me a chance to look at Kitty. She appeared quite cheerful. Now was that entirely just? What are you to do when a girl behaves so? I said to myself what the trump was: it was the ace of diamonds. Then I knew the thing to do. That was about to say I said to Kitty: "Jack Emery is really a fine chap, you know. I wish I was having the setting of his ring changed when I met her."

Here Kitty signaled for trumps without in the least losing her head. "She asked me," I continued, "why I was getting a solitaire, and I told her—she was looking at high—that I was always doing foolish things. Would you like to see the ring?"

Kitty wanted to say "No," but curiosity nodded her head. Between the play I fished the box out of my pocket and passed it to her under the table.

"Oh, Bob!" she was holding it behind her cards and had read the inscription, "From Bob to Kitty."

"I suppose I shall have to exchange it for a cigarette case," said I.

"Would you really?" asked Kitty. "If I must take it back, I must. I'm sorry you acted so foolishly about Freddie."

"Awfully," said I.

"But you should be punished, just the same—so I'll keep the ring."

"There, my dear, you've revoked."

"Did I how odd!" said Kitty, dropping her last card and slipping the ring on her third finger.

When Kitty passed me the cards for the cut I split them at the queen of hearts. Our eyes met. Had some one turned on all the lights and was that a hand playing?

"Does it fit?" I asked.

"Perfectly," said Kitty.

Perhaps it was not exactly good whist we played, and it was certainly considered of Uncle Jeff to end the game; but he need not have called it bumble puppy.

"Why, Jefferson, where are you going?" asked Aunt Helen.

"To the library, for a smoke and a game of solitaire, I guess."

"I think I'll go too," said Aunt Helen. Bless her!

Now, Aunt Helen, you know, was supposed to be deaf. Yet, if she was, why should she kiss Kitty so sweetly and then pat me so fondly on the back, as she left? Could she have understood?

With a charming judgment, Kitty selected for a seat a wide, high-backed davenport and drew her skirts aside, as if to make room for some one.

As I said before, hearts were trumps.

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The Stage.

& & & The Fate of an Olivine Ring. 2 2 2

By Jeanette Walworth.

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SCOT to start a business letter.

Mr. Teddy Yates glanced at the big calendar over his roll-top office desk and said, under his breath: "By George, so it is."

Which, being interpreted, means that the big blue-figured calendar had reminded him of his wife's birthday, and he was glad that the reminder had not come too late.

"Annabel" was a great stickler for anniversary observances, especially those which made for tribute, such as Christmas, birthdays and the like. Also, being young and handsome, she was not adverse to the glitter of a diamond ring or the seductive charm of pearls.

This time it must be something particularly fine. Something which would combine the merits of a peace offering with the dignity of a rite.

He would be glad to wipe out that little episode about Jack Pingree. Of all the asses in the world the jealous ass was the most ridiculous. With a sense of recurrent temper he turned resolutely from contemplation of Mr. Pingree as an irritant to fix his mind on the selection.

His offering should be one of those novelties in jewelry which the shops were making such a blatant boast of—an olivine set about with diamonds, or a costly beryl and pink sapphires. Annabel laid tremendous stress on being up-to-date.

The matter of purchasing and of marking the little morocco case made him late in getting home. He had only a margin of ten minutes in which to dress for dinner. He went directly to his dressing room via the children's nursery, as was his custom.

Two little mouths were to be kissed before he went downstairs to his dinner. Two little hearts to be made glad. The little mouths were sticky, so were twenty small fingers, which clutched recklessly at every available inch of his person.

"You have been eating candy," he said, with severe frown. The frown was for the white-capped daisy who presided automatically over the sticky little mouths and the twenty small fingers. "Nurse, you know I have prohibited their eating the stuff."

Nurse smiled vaguely at the small offenders as she shot a barbed arrow into their father's warm heart:

"Mr. Pingree, sir, gave it to them when he came at lunch time to rooming with Mrs. Yates."

Teddy was a loyal gentleman, not to be thrown off his balance by the insolence of a hiredling. He disapproved of the clinging, sticky little fingers with infinite reasonableness.

"So, then, if mamma knows about the candy it is all right."

He was on his way down to Annabel's room when he saw a red morocco case in his breast pocket. He would lay it on his table before dinner was announced. Pingree should not spoil the evening for him—if he could help it.

As he reached the level of the lower floor the butler had just softly closed the front door on the bringer of a superb bunch of roses.

"For Mrs. Yates, sir, with Mr. Pingree's compliments and congratulations," the man said expansively as he handed the roses to the butler.

Teddy glanced calmly at the flowers. Mrs. Yates, handsomely crowned and coiffured, planned pretentiously at the mantel clock as Teddy entered the room.

"Oh, all nights to keep dinner waiting to-night, Teddy!"

The butler's appearance immediately behind his master cleared the atmosphere. Annabel stretched eager hands toward the flowers. A luminous smile chased the frown from her pretty face.

"Oh, the beautiful! Who did send them?" She took the card that was attached to the roses between her slim jeweled fingers. A soft pink came into her cheeks.

"Compliments and congratulations of J. B. Pingree. Aren't they lovely? And isn't it nice. Ted, to have one friend in the world who is not too much taken up with money-grubbing to remember one's birthday? So thoughtful of him."

"I am sorry to be late," said Teddy with a chill in his voice. "Anything satisfactory on hand?"

"Lohengrin." The Gilders are to call for me. They were so sorry they could not include you in the invitation, but their box only holds six, and they had invited the Rickards and

Jack Pingree before they thought of me.

"Pingree was in the atmosphere. The red morocco box grew heavier against Teddy's bosom every moment, although it had nothing more poisonous than a glittering jewel for a slim white finger."

"I should not have cared to go under any circumstances," he said languidly, and applied himself in silence to his soup.

Annabel's airy assumption of jealousy jarred on him.

"No, I never could educate you up to opera. You would rather go to a whole evening downstairs—so far, the most exciting function they had ever participated in. Yates had an old-fashioned streak in him which Annabel had not yet educated him out of. But of what he had intended doing he said never a word.

Then the Gilders came and Annabel went. So did he, later on, after a long over a good clear, made bitter by unpleasant reflections. Life had its compensations, he supposed, and in watching La Cigale's wonderful performance he could find distraction, if nothing better.

When he entered the crowded music hall he had in his hands a big bunch of roses not unlike those which Jack Pingree had sent to Mrs. Yates earlier in the evening. To the stars and stripes rose was tied a ring—an olivine set about with diamonds. At a carefully selected moment roses and jewel fell at La Cigale's proudest feet.

Later on, as he stood on the curbstone, waiting for an upward-bound car, he flung the red morocco case into an ash receiver. He laughed unpleasantly as it left his hand. As a peace-maker the olivine ring had miscarried.

Nothing so slow-moving as a street car could contain La Cigale and her emotions that night. With a long dark, sister-buttoned closely over her gaudy stage costume she went home in state in a cab. The dancer had suddenly come into a fortune. An inexhaustible fortune, tied to the stem of a rose.

After the cabman had deposited her at the sidewalk of a shabby croquet-street, she had still quite a journey to make before she was really at home.

"At home," in a stuffy little flat at the top of a five-story tenement house. At home after she had opened the door very softly and tip-toed in her spangled slippers up to a lounge planted in front of her one window so that the stars could shine in upon it.

A stifling smell of kerosene oil filled the small room. La Cigale turned the lamp up higher and bent over the lounge. In a voice as soft as a cooing dove she called a name: